

Buddhist Social Concepts

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III [01]

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1. In this Paper we shall try to make an over all study of what the Buddhist world-view means. And its implications in relation to problems of man, today and tomorrow. Some texts like the Aggañña Sutta contained in the Dīgha Nikāya, make references to the evolution of the universe and the appearance of human life therein, the main thrust of the Buddha's thinking is in the direction of the problems of man. The Buddha is not concerned as to the origin of the world as to who created it, or as to who guides it with regard to the destiny of man living in it, and who decides his fate in a life beyond this.
2. This is not the way he looked upon it. The human situation did certainly worry him [Kicchaṃ vata ayam loko āpanno jāyati ca jīyati ca mīyati ca cavati ca uppajjati ca. D.N. II.30 and S.N. II.5]. But he did not turn in the direction of an external agency for its creation or its continuance. He was convinced that it was part of the evolutionary process of the world. [Study words like samsāra and bhava in this context.]. The human, well above the rest in the living world on account of his special capacity to think and judge [with the definition of man given as 'manassa ussannatāya manussā'], became responsible, each one by himself and for himself, for his or her development, socially and spiritually. This is what makes Buddhism to be specially labeled as anthropocentric as against theocentric.
3. Thus to the Buddha, the point of major interest is the humans who constitute it, individually and collectively and how they contribute towards its betterment or deterioration, once again both individually and collectively. An element of grace or goodwill of an outside agency [referred to in Indian religions as prasāda] to whom payers are addressed for that purpose, is virtually absent

on the early Buddhist scene. You yourselves make an endeavor, the Buddha said. The Tathāgatas only indicate the way [Tumhehi kiccaṃ ātappaṃ akkhātāro Tathāgatā].

4. The humanly constituted world of the Buddha could thus be viewed from two angles. Let us first meet the Buddha introducing 1. each human individual as a world in itself. He said that within the 'fathom-sized body with its consciousness and faculty of thinking [īmasmiṃ byāmamatte kalebare saviññāṇake samanake at D.N. II.30 and S.N. II.5] there exists the world, its origin, cessation and the way leading to its cessation.
5. He also held the view that the totality of such beings, in the commonness of the vicissitudes to which they are subjected, constituted the world in the collective sense. This is what he meant when he said that this world is plunged in grief in being born, in being subject to decay, disease and dying, to be born again and again [Kiccaṃ vatā 'yaṃ loko āpanno jāyati ca jīyati ca mīyati ca cavati ca uppajjati ca].



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Buddha's religio-philosophical view of the world: His spiritual quest as a reaction to it.

- A.** The Buddha viewed the totality of the human predicament which involved as a part of its evolutionary process birth into a state of existence [named

jāti], followed by growing up to maturity or aging [*jarā*], disease [*vyādhī*] and death [*maraṇa*] as leading to a state of **unmistakable unhappiness and dissatisfaction** [*kicchaṃ vata ayaṃ loko āpanno* See D.N.II. 30 and S.N.II. 5]. This state of inability to come to terms with, even **with what is normal and natural with a physical body and a mental state like that of the humans**, the Buddha called ***dukkha*** [often translated inadequately as suffering, unsatisfactoriness or unhappiness in life].

This ***dukkha*** is primarily a blunder resulting from the inability of the humans, steeped in ignorance as they are [*avijjā-nīvaraṇānaṃ*] and bonded by craving [*taṇhā-samyojanānaṃ* . See S.N.II.178, 189 & S.N.III. 149, 151 for fuller details] to cope with the very first noteworthy character of life in the world, namely that all things of the world are subject to the **'fundamental law of change'** called ***anicca*** [Skt. *anitya*], impermanence or transience [*Sabba-saṅkhāresu aniccānupassī* S.N.V.345]. It is these two conditions 1 & 2, namely the impermanent nature and the consequent state of dissatisfaction that leads to the invariable conclusion of ***anatta*** or **self-less-ness** or more radically **soul-less-ness**.

These three basic concepts, often referred to as **three signata** form the bed rock of all philosophical and spiritual thinking in Buddhism. This inter-relatedness of ***anicca dukkha anatta*** is beautifully analysed and presented by the Buddha to Dīghāvu, while he was drawing nearer to the last moments of his life, quite unknown to him [See S.N.V. 345]. Awareness of these facts is presented as **wisdom sharing phenomena** or ***vijjā-bhāgiyā-dhammā***. They are, more or less, Nirvana awarding.

- B.** It is the recognition and acceptance of this human situation and seeing the possibility of a way out of it, i.e. the ***dukkha*** and the ***nirodha*** [or its termination] which the Buddha accepted as the subject of his mission. This he constantly repeated [*Pubbe c'āhaṃ bhikkhave etarahi ca dukkhañ*

c' eva paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodhaṃ. M.N. I. 140]. Whatever he preached to the world as **teacher of gods and men**, had to fall in line with this. If ever he left anything out as a subject of discussion [*avyākata*] during his entire religious mission, it was, he maintained, because such themes did not contribute to the sole purpose of '**disenchantment and detachment**' from the involvement in the worldly process of living [*Na h'etaṃ āvuso atthasamhitāṃ nādirahmacariyakaṃ na nibbidāya na virāgāya na nirodhāya na upasamāya na abhiññāya na sambodhāya na nibbānāya samvattati. Tasmā taṃ avyākataṃ Bhagavatā.* S.N. II. 223]. Whatever he proclaimed by way of the dhamma had to subscribe to the attainment of Nibbāna [*nibbānāya samvattati.*].

- C. Therefore whatever the Buddha preached to the world as his religious message had only one specific orientation, namely that of **release from ills of samsāra** [*ekaraso vimuttiraso*]. It is for this reason that Buddhist texts keep vibrantly resounding about **literally reaching the end of the world**. This **world-exiting-approach** is declared to be the one and the only way of reaching the end of suffering [*Na kho panā' haṃ āvuso appatvā lokassa antaṃ dukkhassa antakiriyaṃ vadāmi.* or *Na ca appatvā lokantaṃ dukkhā atthi pamocanaṃ.* Both at S.N. I.62 and A.N.II.48f.]. In the Samyutta and the Anguttara, in the story of a deity by the name of Rohitassa, it is declared in a semi-humorous lighter vein that this journey cannot be undertaken on foot - ***Gamanena na pattabbo lokassanto kudācanaṃ.*** Nevertheless, it insists, that there is no release from suffering without reaching the end of the world.
- D. The World is within Man. The Living process of Man creates and fashions his World.

This world which **Nirvana-seekers** are called upon to **leave behind** and **depart from** is philosophically identified in Buddhist thinking in many

different ways. i. The Buddha says it is literally **contained within this fathom-sized body** [*vyāmamatte kalebare*] of the human. It is further qualified as having within it two important features, namely its **a. cognitive** [*sasaññimhi*] and **b. conceptualizing** [*samanake*] **capacities**. The materiality and mentality or the psycho-physical components out of which the human entity is inseparably composed **are not two separate and different components of different worth** as human and divine., one within the other. This is how the Upanishadic thinkers of India saw them [A thumb-size little man seated in the cavity of the heart.].

Thus in Buddhism, man's world is created out of his sensitivity to the world outside in which he really lives and out of his reactions to it. Of course, out of this incorrect reaction to it there results the grasping at it or ***upādāna***. That is the implications of the two terms *sa* + *saññā* [having cognitive capacity] and *sa* + *manaka* [having conceptualizing capacity]. In the Chain of Causal Genesis or Paṭiccasamuppāda, that is what generates *Saṅkhāra* and *Viññāṇa* for the *samsaric* continuance of every being. This is how, as we have already stated at the very outset, both human continuance in *samsāra* and *dukkha* to which humans are subject within it are primarily the result of a human blunder, stemming out of 'a **lack of true knowledge**' or ***avijjā*** with regard to the true nature of the world or ***yathā-bhūta-pajānana*** or ***yathābhucca***.

At this stage, it is important to turn our attention to a similar reference in the Anguttara Nikaya which **identifies the world of humans in the gratification of their sensual pleasures**. There it says that in the Buddhist discipline [***ariyassa vinaye***] the gamut of **five-fold sensual gratification** is identified as the world [*Pañc' ime brāhmaṇā kāmagaṇā ariyassa vinaye loko 'ti vuccatī*. A.N.IV. 430]. When our reactions to the stimuli of the world are faulty or in other words we tend to grasp at them, then as already stated above, we are said to be producing *upādāna* or factors contributory

to regeneration. That creates our existence process. .

At this point too, like in the earlier instance of the Deity Rohitassa, the philosophical question of **world-exiting** comes up and the Buddha totally rejects the idea of anybody attempting to do it literally and physically - by a **mere act of running** [*sandhāvanikāya*]. He says '*Nāham Brāhmaṇā evarūpāya sandhāvanikāya lokassa antaṃ ñātayyaṃ datṭhayyaṃ pattayyan 'ti vadāmi*. [A.N.IV.430].

Then the discussion **moves into the area of spiritual culture for this same purpose**. The popular method of *jhānas* is then taken taken up. The list of eight *jhānas* - the **first four rūpī** i.e. of the physical plane and the **next four arūpī** of the mental plane - successively gone through, are each one listed as a state of '**world-end-reaching**' [*lokassa antaṃ āgamma lokassa ante viharati*. Ibid]. But the Buddha adds that some would say **that these states are still involved with the world** and are **not moved away from the world** [*Tam aññe evam āhaṃsu ayam 'pi lokapariyāpanno ayam'pi anissaṭo lokamhā 'ti*].

The Buddha himself claims to subscribe to this view [*Aham 'pi brāhmaṇa evaṃ vadāmi*]. That is, even in reaching the last of the *jhāna* series, one has not totally renounced and rejected one's involvement in *saṃsāra*. We would do well to recollect at this stage that the Buddha-aspirant himself, during his period of apprenticeship under Alāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta mastered the seventh and the eighth *jhānas*. But

it is on being told that each one of those was the summit of achievement of those two teachers that Gotama expressed his disappointment - *taṃ dhammaṃ analam karitvā*, i.e. **not finding them equal to the task** of getting out of *saṃsāra*, and determined to pursue his search further. For in his renunciation, he knew what he wanted, his aspiration and the end in view: *anuttaraṃ santivarapadaṃ pariyesamāno*.

What prompted him to leave the world was his search for a way out [*nissaraṇa*] of the ills of the world, the world of *saṃsāra*. The achievement even of the highest *jhāna* still holds one within the world - *anissaṭṭo lokamhā*. Beyond the eighth *jhāna*, one transcends **all reaction to cognitive sensitivity** [*saññā-vedayita-nirodha*]. It is this state of mind which is said to **generate the right degree of wisdom** with which one **totally eliminates all defilements which bind beings to *saṃsāra*** [*Puna ca paraṃ brāhmaṇā bhikkhu sabbaso nevasaññānāsaññāyatanaṃ samatikkamma saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ upasampajja viharati. Paññāya c'ssa divā āsavā parikkhīṇā honti. Ayaṃ vuccati brāhmaṇā bhikkhu lokassa antaṃ āgamma lokassa ante viharati tiṇṇo loke visattkan 'ti. A.N. IV. 431f.*].



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E. World-exiting or World-end-reaching at two different levels in the Buddhist Suttas.

1. We have three important sutta references, all from the Majjhima Nikāya which refer to this religiously and psychologically invaluable concept of **world-exiting** within an ingeniously tailored psycho-ethical pattern, namely the entry into the eight states of *jhānas*.

In the Nivāpa Sutta [M.N. I. p.129 f.], the Buddha refers to the pursuant of the eight-fold *jhānas* [p.159f] as stepping out of the path of evil or literally out of Mara's way [*agati Mārassa Māra-parisāya*]. We must note here that this implies no more than being out of worldly temptations.or

being trapped by worldly desires.

The Buddhist disciple [*bhikkhu*] who successfully goes through the eight *jhānas* is said to have blinded the Evil One and gone out of his reach [*andham akāsi Māram apadaṃ vadhitvā Māraccakkhuṃ adassanaṃ gato pāpimato*].

** We must note here that this implies no more than being out of worldly temptations or being trapped by worldly desires. In this sequence, it is only after **one gets beyond the eighth *jhāna***, when one reaches the stage where **one transcends all reaction to cognitive sensitivity** and reaches the state referred to as *saññāvedayitanirodham*, and along with it acquire the right degree of wisdom with which one totally eliminates all defilements which bind beings to samsara [*paññāya c'assa disvā āsavā parikkhīṇā honti*].], that one is referred to **as having crossed over from the world - *tiṇṇo loka visattikan 'ti***.



BUDDHIST SOCIAL CONCEPTS BPGE 301 - PALI

III [03]

1. The Buddha's Religio-Philosophical view of Human Life - Whither and not Whence.

- A.** From very ancient times, India entertained a theory of scientific evolution, not only of the world but of a vast universe, including great many solar systems of diverse magnitudes which they describe as small, medium and large. At *Anguttara Nikāya* I.227, the Buddha himself is made to put forward this theory about the three-fold solar systems with their suns and

- moons. The Mahayanists share this idea when they speak of the Buddha-Kshetras where a Buddha resides in each.
- B.** On the other hand, Indian religious legends attempt to trace the origin of the world to something like a willed-creation. There is the highly speculative theory of the **Golden Egg** or **Hiranya Garbha** out of the two halves of which the sky above and the earth below are said to have come into being. There is also the ancient theory that the **Great Brahmā** is the Creator and the Progenitor of everything that is in the world.
- C.** The Buddha is seen showing that these ideas are products of inadequate knowledge and unwarranted speculation. What is of utmost importance is that the Buddha's approach to the problem of the human predicament does not necessitate the search for the origin or creation of man. Having discovered the evolutionary process of life in the **Four Noble Truths** and its derivative theories like the **Causal Genesis**, his theory of salvation leading to Nibbāna has given his **world view** or **social philosophy** a **distinctness of character**. We shall approach our study of **Buddhist Social Concepts** from that angle.

2. Society, State and Government.

- A.** According to Buddhism, humans should not opt to stay here for good. Their Master, whether we like it or not, had discovered the **Grand Truth** or **Ariya Sacca** of unsatisfactoriness of life or of life in the world i.e. **dukkha**, both in its physical and its emotional totality. This is not to deny the passing phases of comfort and joy which are realistically estimated as being relatively less when compared to the agony they bring along in their wake: *appassādā kāmā vuttā bahudukkhā bahu-upāyāsā*.
- B.** That is why he looked out for a way of release or **nissaraṇa** and introduced the goal of **Nirvana** as the cessation or **nirodha** of this mass of unhappiness. This **nirodha** is the second of the **Two Primary Truths** he

- had for the world, i. that there was *dukkha* and ii. that there was the possibility of terminating or *nirodha* of that *dukkha*.
- C. Within such a framework of thinking, the Buddha would direct all his teachings towards making all humans in the world **Nibbāna-oriented**. It is a difficult task, he knew. He formulated all his ethical teachings directed that way, both from single individuals upwards to the community and from the community down to single individuals.
- D. Let us take society in the broadest sense of the word, i.e. people at large. Here again the Buddha had to challenge the *Varṇa-āsrma Dharma* or the theory of Divine Origin of the Four Castes - an obnoxious theory of vertically escalating social gradations.



BUDDHIST SOCIAL CONCEPTS BA3 / 301 - PALI III

[04]

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Genesis of the Concept of Kingship in Buddhism as Myth or Legend.

- A. **Buddhism** has a rich inheritance of **myths and legends** with regard to **cosmology, evolution of social institutions** etc. [See **Cakkavattisīhanāda** and **Aggañña** Suttas of the Dīgha Nikāya. D.N. III. 58-79 & 80-98]. What is noteworthy here, and a student of Buddhism must not fail note them here, is the manner in which these inherited ideas are modified and assimilated into a harmonious fabric, with little or no alien identity.

1. Here is the **Cakkavattisīhanāda** [D.N.III. 60ff.] giving us details of the

genesis of the idea of kingship.



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[05]

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Buddhist Concerns regarding Successful Governance.

1. We have seen that the Buddha was equally at home both in the **kingdoms** and in the **republics**. In the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta [D.N.II. 73-5 / Translated at Dialogues of the Buddha II. 79ff.], the Buddha himself tells us of his having advised the **Vajjis** of the Vajjian Republic about the **norms of good government** out of which there would result for the country and the people only **peace and prosperity** [*vuddhi yeva pāṭikaṅkhā no parihāni*] and **never a decline**, as well as unassailable security. In fact the Magadhan ruler King Ajatasatthu was dissuaded from invading the Vajjian Republic on these grounds.
2. Let us take a quick glance at them. i. Vajjis are regular and frequent in meeting together [*Vajjī abhinhaṃ sannipātā sannipātabahulā*], ii. They sit down together in harmony, rise up in harmony and carry out their state activities in harmony [*Vajjī samaggā sannipatanti samaggā vuṭṭhahanti samaggā Vajjikaraṇīyāṇi karontī ' ti*]. iii. They never keep formulating new legal enactments, never abrogate the old ones, but abide by the Vajjian conventions as already laid down [*Vajjī apaññattam na paññāpentī paññattam na samucchindanti yathāpaññatte porāṇe Vajji-dhamme samādāya vattantī ' ti*]. iv. They respect their senior citizens, honour them and think it incumbent on them to listen to them with due esteem [*Vajjī ye*

te Vajjīnaṃ Vajjimahallakā te sakkaronti garukaronti mānanti pūjenti tesañ ca sotabbaṃ maññanti ī ' t]. v. They respect the ladies of their community and never commit acts of sex violence on them by force [Vajjī yā tā kulitthiyo kulakumāriyo tā na okkassa pasayha vāsentī ' t]. vi. They respect their Vajjian religious monuments, both within and outside their territory. They pay them due honour and recognition and never neglect their contribution towards their maintenance [Vajjī yāni tāni Vajjīnaṃ Vajjicetiyaṃni abbhantarāni c 'eva bāhirāni ca tāni sakkaronti garukaronti mānanti pūjenti tesañ ca dinna-pubbaṃ katapubbaṃ dhammikaṃ baliṃ no parihāpentī ' ti.]. vii. They have well organized proper safety and security for their worthy religious personnel in order that such persons would continue to come into their country in the future as well as that those already living in the country would continue to do so in comfort [Vajjīnaṃ arahantesu dhammikārakkhāvaraṇa-gutti susamvihitā kin ' ti anāgatā ca arahanto vijitaṃ āgaccheyyūṃ āgtā ca arahanto vijite phāsuṃ vihareyyun ' t].

3. The Buddha is seen making most of these considerations the basis for the consolidation of his own Monastic Order and assuring the success of the spiritual growth of his disciples. A second glance at them would be worth our while.
 - a. Regularly frequent and equally harmonious get-togethers are given as a vital ingredient of political strength. Even the best forms of so-called Democracies could not ask for anything better. Items i. and ii. above contribute towards this.
 - b. Respect for the established constitutional set-up and the legal enactments within it and operating in conformity to it are a must for any system of respectable government with an evolutionary sense of continuity. Any talk of law-enforcement in a country,

divorced from this, would amount to a mere mockery. Frivolous changes to the legal machinery or haphazard introduction of retrospective legislation etc. degrades the judiciary of a state. Item iii. adequately safeguards this vital need.

- c. Item iv. covers a country's respect for its elders, an invariable ingredient in the maturing of any political ideology, much more than the present day vicious system of eliminating political rivals within the party. Item v. highlights the concept of gender equality as well as the concept of bi-sexual social build-up. Finally vi. and vii. provides more than adequately for the healthy inter-action of religion on the healthy growth of society and statecraft.



BUDDHIST SOCIAL CONCEPTS BA3 / 301 - PALI III

[06]

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A. Historical beginnings of the Choice of a King and Preference for Monarchical Rule.

1. The Dīgha Nikāya has two suttas - Cakkavattisīhanāda and Aggañña - which trace back these ideas to their sociological beginnings [D.N.III. 58 ff .and 80 ff.]. At D.N.III.92, the Aggañña traces the dawn of a social consciousness for the need of a king to maintain law and order in a community where collective social consciousness is seen to be breaking down. The sutta depicts a time when, during a food-gatherers' age people unscrupulously harvested more than an allowable share and hid it for

themselves.

Such acts had to be censured and miscreants even physically dealt with [*Mā ssu bho satta puna pi evarūpaṃ akāsī 'ti. Aññe pāṇinā pahariṃsu aññe leḍḍunā pahariṃsu aññe daṇḍena pahariṃsu*. They wished to choose some one in the role of a law-enforcement-authority [*Yannūna mayaṃ ekaṃ sattaṃ sammanneyyāma. So no sammā khīyitabbaṃ khīyeyya sammā garahitabbaṃ garaheyya sammā pabbājetabbaṃ pabbājeyya*]. They agreed to offer him in turn a share of rice. He thus came to be voluntarily paid for by the people for the services rendered.

This choice of a ruler invariably turned out to be a selection for the people, by the people from among themselves. Since he was expected to delight the people righteously, he came to be called **rājā** [*Dhammena pare rañjetī ti kho Vāseṭṭha rājā*. ibid.93].

2. The concept of **Universal Monarch** or **rājā cakkavatti** in Buddhism, makes us feel that the Buddha while offering instructions and counsel to the rulers of smaller Republican states for healthy and harmonious government, perhaps felt that a well planned kingdom under a just and efficient king, **dhammiko dhammarājā**, had far greater resources for stabler government, with greater prospects of economic development and socially sound moral growth.[See also D.N.II.169 ff.Cakkavattisīhanāda].
 - a. In terms of instruction regarding statecraft, the most noteworthy thing about the concept of Universal Monarch or **rājā cakkavatti** appears to be its non-sectarian and universal character, both in terms of political ideology and religious inclination. His state policy appears to be well above party politics and religious dogmatism.
 - b. In all instances, a Cakkavatti **denounces the idea of a political monopoly**, of a single central government ruled over by a single

person. **Any political ideology can be a good one**, without any need for overthrow, **as long as it is run on just lines**, i.e. on a **dhamma basis**. Wherever the story of a Cakkavatti comes, we are told that rulers in all parts of the world, east, west, north, south, they all come to him and pledge subservience to him, seeking to be instructed with regard to running their governments [*Ehi kho mahārāja sāgataṃ mahārāja sakam te mahārāja anusāsa mahārāja 'ti*. D.III.62].

- c. For the Cakkavatti, the basis for **good statecraft** is a grounding for all mankind on a universal ethic of good morality, acceptable the world over. That ' religion-based grounding' **undoubtedly is the missing dimension of statecraft today**. This is undeniably the ethics of the Buddhist *Pañca-sīla*. But it is delivered without any distinct label for the market place. The Jainas have something approximating to this but it does not appear to be the same. The Cakkavatti insists that every ruler enforces this in his own land and gives each one the freedom thereafter to administer their countries **according to their own political ideologies as they have done so far** [*Yathābhuttañ ca bhujjathā 'ti*. loc.cit.].



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[07]

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A. Buddhist instructions for good government under Monarchial Rule.

Contd.

1. Under the concept of **Cakkavatti** is held the **ideal ruler of a state in Buddhism**. He is the **Just King** [*dhammaiko dhammarājā*]. He embodies everything that a good ruler of state could be. The **Cakkavattisihanāda Sutta** [D.N.III.60f.] puts it that even when the kingdom of a Cakkavatti has collapsed, he could restore it himself, by re-establishing himself in the virtues of a Cakkavatti, i.e. *Ariye cakkavatti-vatte vattamānassa...dibbaṃ cakkaratanaṃ pātubhavissati*. Here are the several items of **Cakkavatti vatta** or **Cakkavatti obligations**.
 - a. Respecting and upholding the Dhamma, he shall provide security and protection to
 - i. the people of his household, ii. the armed forces, iii. the Kshatriyas who are his followers, iv. Brahmins and householders, v. people in the outlying provinces, vi. persons of religious orders, vii. and the birds and beasts.
 - b. He shall **eliminate crime in the country** [Mā ca te tāta vijite adhammakāro pavattittha].
 - c. He shall **provide financial assistance to the have-nots in the land** [*Ye ca te tāta vijite adhanā assu tesaṃ ca dhanaṃ anuppadajjeyyās*].
 - d. He shall **from time to time visit and consult the worthy and honourable religious men** who are bent on their spiritual uplift and question them regarding i. wholesome and unwholesome behaviour [*kusalaṃ* and *akusalaṃ*], ii. correct and incorrect activities [*sāvajjam* and *anavajjam*], iii. as to what should be done and what should be avoided [*sevitabbam* and *na sevitaḅbam*], iv. what when being done by him will stand for misery and

unhappiness and what when being done by him stand for happiness and welfare [*kiṃ me kayiramānam dīgharattaṃ ahitāya dukkhāya assa kiṃ vā pana me kayiramānaṃ dīgharattaṃ hitāya sukhāya assā ' ti.*]. And having heard from them, shall avoid evil and do what is right. **This is the noble way of the Cakkavatti King. *Idaṃ kho tāta taṃ ariyaṃ cakkavatti-vattan ' ti.***

2. The Kūṭadanta Sutta [D.N.I.135f.] has its own formula for correct utilisation of man power resources of a country in order to bring about peace and prosperity to the land and to eliminate violence and crime in society.

a. In a discussion with Brahmin Kūṭadanta, the Buddha presents these ideas as the wisdom of the ancients [*Bhūta-pubbaṃ Brāhmaṇa ...*]. The Royal Chaplain who is a Brahmin [who is **later identified as the Bodhisatta himself in one of his previous lives** at p.143] advises the King that even if criminals in the land were punished and crimes were arrested for the time being, new waves of crime could come up again with new bands of criminals, time and again.

i. He suggests, in the alternative, **profitable utilization of man power resources of the land** as a **better approach to reduction of crime**. People would be occupied and there would be a continuous source of happiness and enjoyment for people in the land when there is plenty in the land and economic well-being. People **being engaged in their own professional activities** [*sakamma-pasutā*] would **not turn out to be a source of disturbance** [*rañño janapadam na vihetthessanti*]. ii. It is also suggested that people **be engaged and employed according to their skills**, thus avoiding wastage of talent. For those good at agriculture and

animal husbandry [*kasi-gorakkhe*], the king should provide planting material like seed-corn and food etc. [*bīja-bhattam*]. To the merchant class, he should provide inducements like capital [*pābhatam*]. To those employed in state-service, the king should provide both wages and regular supply of food [*bhatta-vetanam*]. Viewed all round, it seems a system of profitable and pleasure-yielding occupational therapy. contd.



BUDDHIST SOCIAL CONCEPTS BA3 / 301 - PALI III

[08]

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A. Economic Considerations [Money, Wealth etc.] and Buddhist Social Philosophy.

1. Within the corpus of Buddhist social philosophy, the Buddha was wise enough **to consider money** [*dhana*] and **wealth in material possessions** etc. [*bhoga*] **as the sheet anchor of economic stability** both of individuals and of the community. **Notions of haves and have-nots** were vividly known to the Indians even as far back as twenty-five centuries ago. They were not merely playing with words when they referred to different individuals, some as being with little possessions or *appabhogā* and to others as possessing inexplicably great amounts of money or *mahaddhanā*.
2. Those who fell below the poverty line or *daliddā* are those who possessed **'nothing called their own'** or *a + ssaka*. Their **acquisition of food and clothing** was with **utmost difficulty** [*kasirena ghāsacchādo labbhati*].

Seeing poverty as a reality, much thought is given in Buddhism to **poverty alleviation**. The State was looked up to as having a very big say in bringing about economic well being among its people.

****** [Go back to sheet No, 07. 2.a.i.]. **Correct employment of man power resources**, each according to his skill was the first rule. **Then came the inducements** like planting material and agricultural implements to farmers, like capital to tradesmen and free meals to all workers where necessary. Further attractions like **over-time payments**, and **health-care services** were among the many **items of labour organization** in Buddhist teachings, recommended and prescribed. See Sigālovāda Sutta - Dīgha Nikāya.

3. While the State or the private employer was constantly advised on the benevolent handling of labour for mutual benefit, there was also a special code of ethics for the workman's consideration. In answer to a Thousand Dollar Question put to the Buddha by a so-called powerful personality [*yakkha*] by the name of **Alavaka** as to how one earns wealth [*Kathaṃ su vindate dhanam*], the Buddha's straight-forward answer was ' The man with energetic application earns his wealth ' [*Uṭṭhātā vindate dhanam*].
4. In the world today, men with deeper wisdom and greater sanity in their heads are sponsoring that **Religion, as a missing dimension, should be restored to Statecraft**. The twentieth century which the world has perilously and precariously survived, almost by the skin of its teeth, witnessed two massive world wars. The second being staggeringly self-destructive with items like the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on the agenda. This is why **Buddhism**, more than twenty-five centuries ago, sponsors the idea of the **good king** with the **idea of righteousness in his head** to be the model ruler of the world or *rājā cakkavatti*. He is also *dhammiko dhammarājā*.
5. Equally valid today, and has to be so, is the correct vision that the

economic well-being of **individuals** or **States** should be securely founded on unquestionably **just** and **righteous means**. For **economic development of less developed countries**, world leadership must realize, it is not so much who lends whom and on what terms and conditions [the World Bank or the I.M.F.], but how justifiably acquired is the wealth which any nation in the world can claim as its own, for its own use, or for making it available to others. To this, the Buddhists again prefix the word **righteously acquired** [*dhammikehi dhammaladdhehi bhogehi*].

6. Literally, such money is righteously earned with exertion [*uṭṭhāna-viriyādhigatehi dhammikehi dhamma-laddhehi bhogehi*] through the brawn of one's arm and the sweat of one's brow [*bāhā-bala-paricitehi sedāvakkhittehi* as at A.N. III.45]. contd.



BUDDHIST SOCIAL CONCEPTS BA3 / 301 - PALI III

[09]

IBU - Penang Campus 2000

A. Economic Considerations - Need for Lending and Borrowing and relevant Ethics in terms of Buddhist Social Philosophy.

1. We have already observed earlier **the reality of the existence of haves and have-nots** in any human society, anywhere in the world. Our search would not be in vain, whether it were carried out even in so-called realistic thinking communist or socialist states, not to speak of within capitalist systems.
2. Economic deficiencies not only hamper personal happiness of individuals

in the human community [like find even their food and clothing with immense difficulty], but also deter them from initiating any activities for future development. That is why Buddhist teachings require the State to look into this aspect of poverty [*dāliddiya*] and even step into provide financial assistance to alleviate poverty. If this is not looked into, and poverty tends to increase, then there is said to be a relative increase of crime in the land. This may not be an absolute position but at least a relative one. This is how the Cakkavattisīhanāda Sutta puts it at D.N. III.65....*no ca adhanānaṃ dhanam anuppdāsi. Adhanānaṃ dhane anuppadiyamāne dāliddiyaṃ vepullaṃ agamāsi. Dāliddiyaṃ vepulla-gate aññataro puriso paresaṃ adinnaṃ theyyasaṅkhātāṃ ādiyi.*

3. This would be outright grants of funds by the State as a first step to alleviate poverty. With such assistance, people are expected to rehabilitate themselves totally: i. you live with this money - *attanā ca jīvāhi*, ii. look after your parents - *mātā-pitaro ca posehi*, iii. look after your wife and children - *putta-dāraṇ ca posehi*, iv. find yourself a living - *kammante payojehi*, v. be also religiously engaged so that you make a success of your life hereafter - *samaṇesu brāhmaṇesu uddhaggikaṃ dakkhiṇaṃ patiṭṭhapehi sovaggikaṃ sukha-vipākaṃ sagga-saṃvattanikaṃ* [op.cit.p.66]. Fruitful engagement in employment avenues [*kammante payojehi*] was a basic requirement while providing such funds. But the same text also knows that such privileges could be very much abused.
4. For those in society who were below the poverty line [*daliddo*], there were also other possible channels of relief. Those who had no possessions of their own to begin with [*a + ssako*] would go to private money-lending sources from where they could obtain loans with various conditions of payable interest [*vaḍḍhi*]. Anguttara Nikāya gives us an illuminating account of poverty from various angles, telling us of the very sad lot of the poor, who were virtually harassed and heckled. Getting money on loan

itself is a painful, believed to be humiliating situation [*Yam 'pi bhikkave daliddo assako anālhiko iṇaṃ ādiyati iṇādānam ' pi bhikkhave dukkhaṃ lokasmiṃ kāmabhogino ' ti. ... iṇādānam ' pi vaddhi pi .. codanā ' pi anucariyā ' pi ... bhandhanam ' pi.. lokasmiṃ kāmabhogino ' ti.*][A.N.III. 351f.].

5. The more enterprising ones in society get money on loan, make a start in life, achieve success in their new ventures, pay back their loans, have enough and to spare to spend on their families. That is a great source of joy to them, This is highly spoken of in Buddhist texts [*Ahaṃ kho pubbe iṇaṃ ādāya kammante payojesiṃ. Tassa me kammantā samijjhimsu. So ' haṃ yāni ca porāṇāni iṇa-mūlāni tāni ca vyanti-akāsīm. Atthi ca me uttarim avasiṭṭhaṃ dāra-bharaṇāyā ' ti. So tato nidānaṃ labhetha pāmujjam adhigacche somanassaṃ. D.N.I. 71f.*].
6. Supporting this benevolent system of funding - either by grants or loans - Buddhists also work towards a supporting system of ethics in this fields. **All ethics of borrowing and lending are to be mutually respected.** Monies borrowed must be paid back, on due dates, as agreed upon. **There shall be neither evading nor denial when called upon to pay.** Such behaviour of evasion is referred to as '**despicably low and vulgar**'. [*Yo have iṇaṃ ādāya cujjamāno palāyati. Na ca me iṇam atthī ' ti taṃ jaññā vasalo iti.*].



BUDDHIST SOCIAL CONCEPTS BA3 / 301 - PALI III

[10]

IBU - Penang Campus 2000

A. Economic Considerations - Justifiable and Correct Spending of one's Wealth and Earned Income [Bhogānaṃ ādiyā] - in terms of Buddhist Social Philosophy.

1. We have seen that Buddhism upholds the view that poverty underlies all or most ills of a layman's life in the household [*Dāḷiddiyaṃ bhikkhave dukkhaṃ lokasmiṃ kāmabhogino ' ti*].

Money and wealth helps to put this situation right. Therefore Buddhism encourages cautious supply of financial assistance in cases of real need. Such funds provided, it is insisted on, must be put to maximum good use.

2. But whoever acquires money, individuals or state, must acquire it by fair and justifiable means - *dhammikehi dhamma-laddhehi bhogehi*.
3. Money is more for its continuous utility value. It is not for stock-piling. It must supply the needs of people in society - their food, clothing, shelter etc. etc. There are duties and obligations to be fulfilled. These are called in Buddhist terms *Bhogānaṃ ādiyā*. A.N.III. 45.
4. They are five in number [*Pañca ime gahapei bhogānaṃ ādiyā*]. With such **strenuously earned** money [*uṭṭhāna-viriyādhigatehi bhogehi*], with the sweat of one's brow and the brawn of one's muscles [*sedāvakkhittehi bāhābalaparicitehi*], which is impeccably righteous in the mode of acquisition [*dhammikehi dhamma-laddhehi*] ----

A.

- i. One must sustain oneself reasonably well - *attānaṃ sukheti pīṇeti*.
- ii. Look after one's parents - *mātā-pītaṃ sukheti pīṇeti*.

- iii. Support one's wife and children - puttadāra-dāsa-kammakāra-porise sukheti pīṇeti.

These three constitute the first obligation.

- B. Next he provides for the happiness and comfort of his friends and relations - *mittāmacce*.
- C. Insures himself against disasters through fire, floods, state prosecutions, burglaries etc.
- D. Provides for the five-fold dues [*pañca balī kattā hoti*]- i. to the relatives, ii. to the guests, iii. to the ancestors, iv. to the state and v. towards heavenly beings.
- E. Takes adequate care of the honour-worthy religious men who are intent on their own spiritual uplift in order that his own happiness in the life-after may be well guaranteed [*Tathārūpesu samaṇa-brāhmaṇesu uddhaggikaṃ dakkhiṇaṃ patiṭṭhāpeti sovaggikaṃ sukhavipākaṃ sagga-saṃvattanikaṃ*].

*** A good Buddhist is not unhappy when his wealth is spent out in this manner. He is indeed happy. When he spends thus, he is always happy, whether there is a diminishing or an increase in his wealth.

*Bhuttā bhogā bhatā bhaccā vitiṇṇā āpadāsu me
uddhaggā dakkhiṇā dinnā atho pañca balī katā
upaṭṭhitā sīlavanto saññatā brahmacāriyo
yad atthaṃ bhogaṃ iccheyya paṇḍito gharaṃ āvasaṃ
so me attho anuppatto kataṃ ananutāpiyaṃ
etaṃ anussraṃ macco ariya-dhamme ṭhito naro
idh 'eva naṃ pasamsanti pecca sagge ca modati ' ti.*